

Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report

January to December 2017

Executive Summary

The Niger Delta peace and conflict landscape has undergone significant changes since 2009 when the Federal government commenced a Presidential Amnesty Program for ex-militants in the region. However, the relative security brought about by the amnesty program has been eroded by the emergence of other conflict issues. This report examines the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence, identifies key interrelated drivers and pressures on peace and stability at the regional state and local levels. Data sources include ACLED (www.acleddata.com), Nigeria Watch (www.nigeriawatch.org), CIEPD (<https://ciepdwc.crowdmap.com>), NSRP Sources (focused on Violence Affecting Women and Girls), IPDU SMS early warning system, and others.

According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), there was a shift in the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence in the Niger Delta in 2017, compared to the previous year. Criminality and gang violence were the most prevalent conflict issues in 2016, while communal violence, especially tensions over land as well as herder/farmer clashes, was predominant in 2017.

Other key conflict issues in 2017 included robbery, cult clashes, kidnapping, piracy, militancy/counter-insurgency operations, ethno-nationalist agitations, mob violence, killing for ritualistic purposes, political tensions, riots/protests, as well as domestic and sexual violence.

Militancy was the most lethal type of violence in 2017, as measured by fatalities per incident. According to data (see second graph on page 4), on the average, every incident of piracy results in over 7 fatalities. This is followed by inter-communal conflict with an average of 4.8 fatalities per incident.

Overall, the most reported violence relate to criminality (including piracy, abductions, and robberies - but excluding cultist supremacy battles), with 490 fatalities. This was followed by communal/ethnic tensions with 411 fatalities. This comprised land disputes, farmer/herder conflicts, and ethnic separatist agitation.

Gang/cultist supremacy battles was the third highest conflict issue in the region during the period, resulting in 185 fatalities in 48 reported incidents. Gang violence was reported in all the

states in the region, but it was more widespread in Rivers, Cross River and Edo state.

Militancy also caused about 100 fatalities during this period, especially in Bayelsa, Ondo and Rivers state, driven mainly by attacks by militants and counter-insurgency operations of security forces.

The hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged in 2017, compared to 2016. According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), the most violent states during period, based on the number of reported conflict fatalities, were Cross River, Delta, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom, respectively.

The most violent local government areas (LGAs) in 2017 were Itu (Akwa Ibom), Yala (Cross River), Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni (Rivers), Uruan (Akwa Ibom), Port Harcourt (Rivers), Yenagoa (Bayelsa), and Oredo (Edo) respectively.



Regional Dynamics of Conflict Risk and Insecurity

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is highly diverse with over 40 ethnic groups who speak more than 100 languages and dialects. The region comprises 185 out of the 774 local government areas and covers 9 out of the 36 states of Nigeria: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. With over 30 million people, according to a 2006 population census, and an estimated population density of 265 people per square kilometer, the region accounts for more than 23 percent of Nigeria’s population.

The Niger Delta area contains vast reserves of oil and gas, which play an important role in the Nigerian economy. In spite of these abundant natural resources, the Niger Delta is marked by poverty, economic underdevelopment, inequality, and environmental degradation. Historical tensions and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian) contribute to changing conflict and security dynamics in the region.

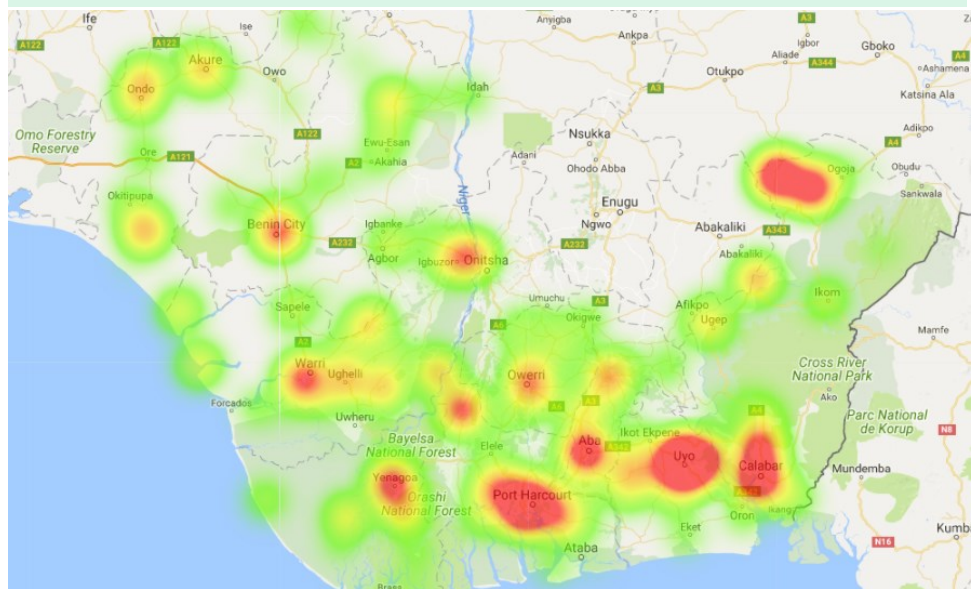
Since 2009 when the federal government commenced a Presidential Amnesty Program for militants, the peace and conflict landscape in the Niger Delta has undergone significant changes. The relative stability gained through the amnesty program has been eroded by the reemergence of other forms of violent conflict in the region. Conflict issues include communal tensions, political competition, organized criminality, and resource-based conflicts. Incidents include

militancy, piracy, cultism, election violence, communal violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, mob violence, and land disputes.

According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), while the nature of violence in the region varies, organized criminality, land disputes and communal clashes remain the primary causes of lethal violence in 2017. Data sources include ACLED (www.acleddata.com), Nigeria Watch (www.nigeriawatch.org), NSRP Sources (focused on Violence Against Women and Girls), the IPDU SMS early warning system, CIEPD, and others.

This annual report looks at the trends and patterns of conflict risk factors and incidents of violence, and the related pressures on peace and stability in the Niger Delta. The report is not designed as a conflict analysis, but rather it is intended to update stakeholders on the annual patterns and trends in violence. An understanding of the deeper conflict drivers and related impact, allows stakeholders to proactively address emerging trends rather than only reactively respond to conflict incidents.

Fatalities Heatmap of Lethal Violence in the Niger Delta



Heatmap shows concentration of conflict fatalities reported from January-December 2017 in the Niger Delta. Source: All data sources formatted for the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Trends and Patterns in Conflict Risk and Violence — January to December 2017

There was a shift in the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence in the Niger Delta in 2017, compared to the trend in 2016. There has been a decrease in cultism, political violence, and militancy since 2016, but an increase in communal violence. Violence in Rivers, for instance, reduced after the contentious elections of 2016, while communal violence in Cross River and Akwa Ibom increased significantly. Meanwhile in 2017 there was also an increase in Igbo ethno-nationalist agitation especially in Abia, Delta, and Rivers.

The most violent month during the year was July, with a total of 256 fatalities. In one incident in July, for instance, 84 persons were reportedly killed in a communal dispute over land in Cross River. Separately, in April, 29 people were reportedly

killed in a dispute between communities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River.

According to data (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org), the hotspots of conflict in the region remained largely unchanged during the period, compared to 2016. The most violent states during the year were Cross River, Delta, Rivers, and Akwa Ibom. Communal conflict over land disputes resulted in several dozens of fatalities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom. Herder/farmer clashes were also prevalent in Delta State, resulting in dozens of fatalities. In Rivers state criminality and cult related violence caused dozens of violent fatalities during the year.

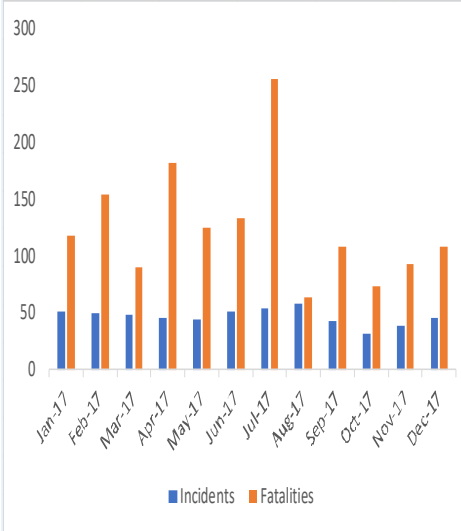
The most violent LGA in the region was Itu, Akwa Ibom, where there was a spike in communal

violence between Ikot Offiong and Oku Iboku community militias.

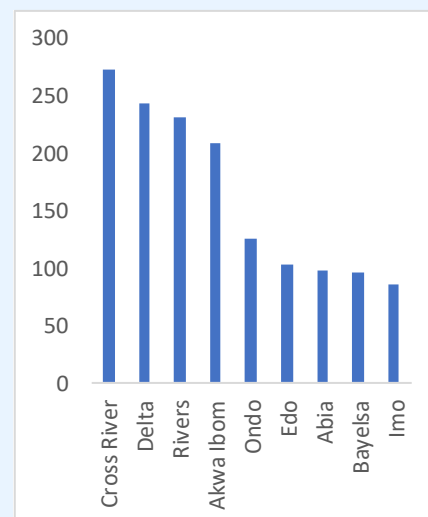
Conflict risk and violence also impacted on the human rights of individuals during the period. Many of the criminal incidents and communal conflict involved violence affecting women and girls (VAWG). In addition to the impact of criminal and communal violence on the livelihoods of women and girls, counter-insurgency operations by public security forces affected the human rights of residents, especially women and girls.

The following pages provide a breakdown by prevalent conflict risk as to the main issues reported in 2017 and the key conflict drivers.

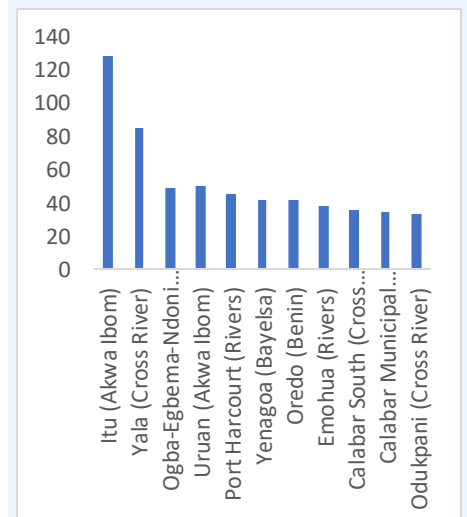
Incidents and Fatalities, Niger Delta (January-December 2017)



Conflict Fatalities, State Level (January-December 2017)



Conflict Fatalities, LGA Level (January-December 2017)



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Trends and Patterns in Conflict Risk and Violence — January to December 2017

In 2017 the conflict landscape in the Niger Delta was dominated mainly by organized criminality (including robbery, kidnapping, and piracy), communal conflict (including land disputes, farmer/herder clashes, and ethno-nationalist agitation), gang violence, and militancy/counter-insurgency, as well as human rights issues and protests.

The most lethal conflict issues during the year, based on the average number of fatalities per incident were militancy/counter insurgency, communal violence, gang violence, and criminality including piracy.

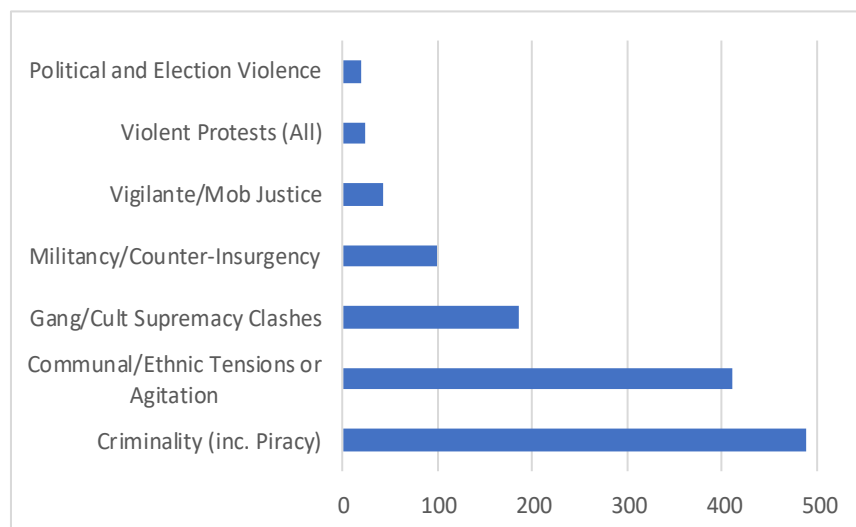
The response of the public security forces to militancy, kidnapping and other organized criminality resulted in several fatalities during the year, particularly in Rivers, Ondo, Bayelsa and Delta. In Ondo state, for instance, 19 persons were reportedly killed during a clash between militants and operatives of the joint military task force code-named ‘Operation Delta Safe’.

There was an increase in communal violence in 2017, especially tensions over land, as well as herder/farmer clashes. Communal violence was reported in all the states in the region, and it was the cause of several violent fatalities during the period. Communal conflict was prevalent in Delta,

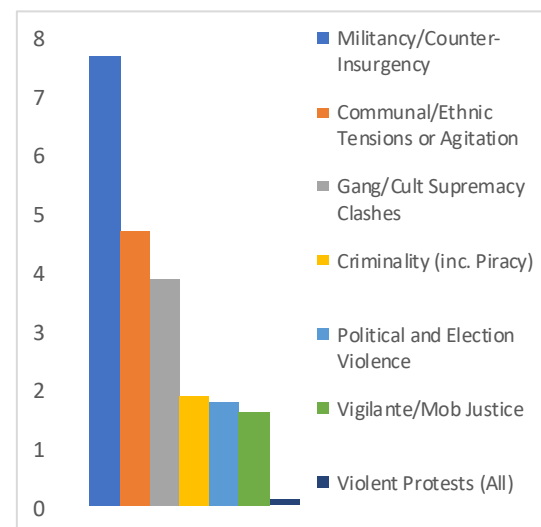
Cross River and Akwa Ibom states. In Delta, dozens were reported killed during the year, in herder/farmer conflict, as well as in communal conflict relating to land dispute and leadership tussle. In Cross River and Akwa Ibom state, communal violence was mainly driven by tensions over land and boundary disputes.

Gang violence was also widespread during this period, and resulted in several fatalities in Rivers, Cross River, Edo, Akwa Ibom and Delta, driven largely by rival cult clashes, and supremacy battles among the numerous rival cult groups in the region, as well as general criminality.

Dominant Conflict Issues, Regional Level Fatalities (January-December 2017)



Most Lethal Conflict Issues, Fatalities Per Incident (January-December 2017)



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Criminality

Criminality contributed the most to conflict risk and violence in the Niger Delta in 2017. Incidents of criminal violence during the period mainly involved kidnapping and robbery. Criminality peaked in July, causing 98 fatalities in 29 incidents. Criminality was a key security issue in the entire region during the year, but it was more prevalent in Delta and caused more fatalities per incident in Rivers. Criminality was also rife in Akwa Ibom during the year.

Delta

Several incidents of criminality were reported in Delta, especially kidnapping for ransom and gun violence. Criminality was a key security issue in the state, especially in Ughelli North, Ughelli South, Uvwie, Isoko South, Ika North, Ndokwa East, Udu, Aniocha North, Aniocha South, Oshimili South,

Oshimili North, Sapele, Ethiope East, Isoko North, Warri South, Okpe and Burutu LGAs. For instance, kidnappers reportedly abducted a policeman in Ika North in January, a medical doctor in Ughelli North in April, and five siblings in Okpe LGA in June. Gun violence was also prevalent in the state during the period. In April, for instance, two policemen, including an inspector, were reportedly shot dead by herdsmen in Ughelli North LGA. Separately, in May, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ASP) was reportedly killed by gunmen in Ughelli North.

Rivers

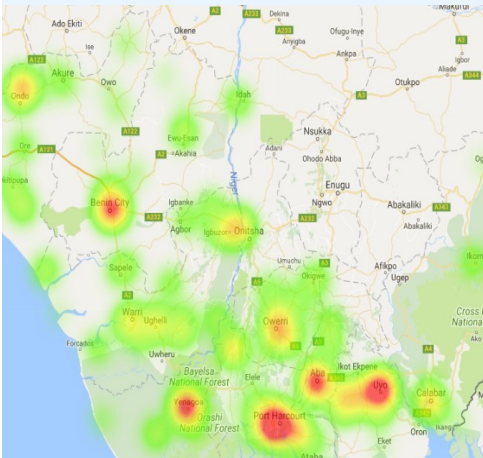
Criminality in Rivers during the period related mainly to kidnapping for ransom and gun violence. Criminality was prevalent in Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Emohua, Port Harcourt, Tai, Akuku-Toru, and

Degema LGAs. In March, for example, robbers reportedly intercepted a bullion van, killed a policeman and escaped with a large sum of money in Ikwerre LGA. Separately, in July, 14 passengers who were traveling in a commercial bus were kidnapped at gunpoint in Emohua LGA.

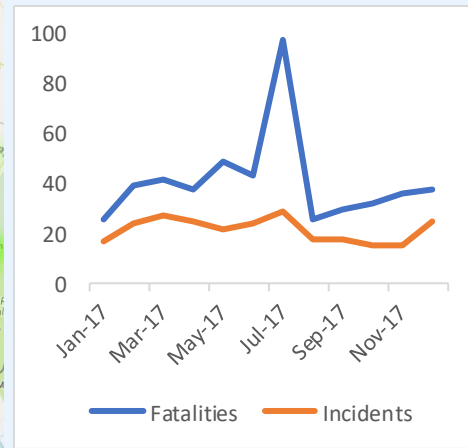
Akwa Ibom

Criminality was also prevalent in Akwa Ibom state during this period, particularly in Ukanafun, Uyo, Eket, and Ikot Ekpene LGAs. In April, for instance, two expatriates were reportedly kidnapped from their hotel rooms in Eket LGA, the secretary to the Ukanafun LGA was assassinated at his farm, and a man was kidnapped at gunpoint from a church in Uyo, the state capital. Separately, in December, four prisoners were reported killed and 47 others escaped during a jailbreak in Ikot Ekpene LGA.

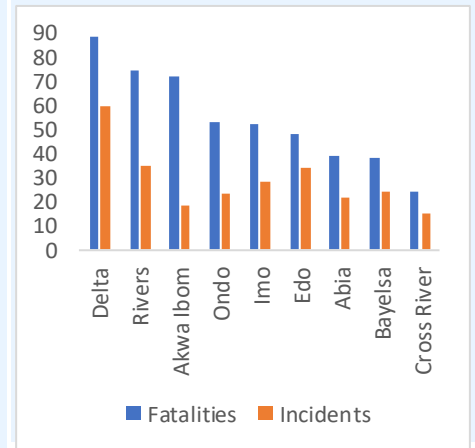
Fatalities Heat Map, Criminality



Incidents and Fatalities, Criminality - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Criminality



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Communal Violence

There has been an increase in communal violence in the Niger Delta since 2016. Communal violence was a key conflict issue in the region in 2017. Communal conflict was driven mainly by inter-communal tensions and land disputes, and it was a major cause of several violent fatalities during the year. In July, for instance, communal conflict caused 92 fatalities in nine incidents. Communal conflict was reported in all the states in the region but it was more prevalent in Cross River, Akwa Ibom, and Delta states.

Cross River

Hundreds were reported killed in communal conflict over land during the year, especially in Abi, Obubra, Odukpani, Obudu, Yala, Akamkpa, Biase, and Boki LGAs. Some of the conflicts involved boundary disputes with communities in neighboring Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Benue state. Between February and June, for instance, over 80 people were reported killed in clashes over land dispute between communities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom state. Separately, clashes between herders and farmers reportedly caused a fatality in

Yala in November, and four fatalities in Odukpani in December. There were also reported attacks on a border community in Boki LGA of Cross River by Cameroonian gendarmes over land encroachment.

Akwa Ibom

Several violent communal conflicts were reported in the state during the period, particularly clashes over land dispute between communities in the state and neighboring Cross River. In May, for example, gunmen suspected to be ethnic militias attacked a fishing community and killed over 45 persons in Uruan LGA. The attack was reportedly related to a land dispute between communities in Akwa Ibom and communities in Cross River state.

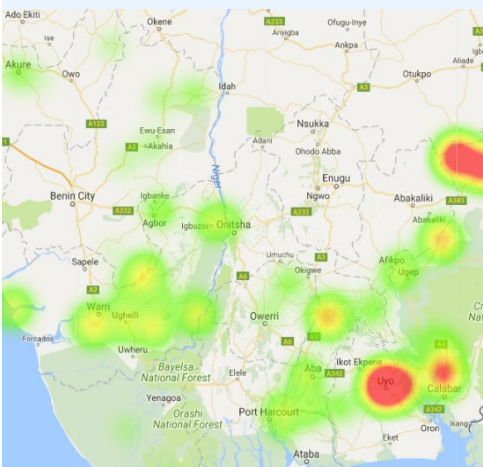
Delta

Dozens of people were reported killed in the state in herder/farmer conflict, as well as in communal conflict relating to land dispute and leadership tussle. Several people were reported killed in clashes between herders and farmers in Ethiope East, Ukwuani, Ughelli North, Ndokwa East, Oshimili North, and Aniocha South LGAs. In

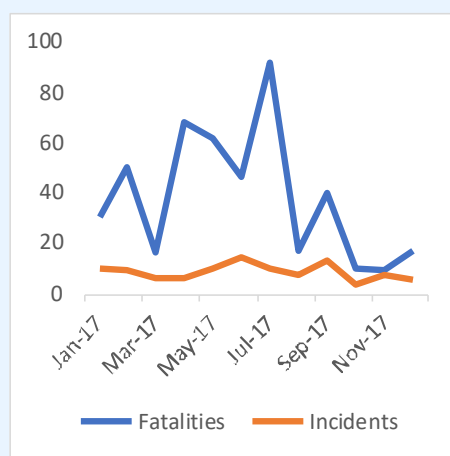
October, for instance, herders reportedly attacked a community, killed six residents and destroyed crops in Oshimili North LGA. Also, communal tensions over boundary disputes and leadership tussles were key conflict issues during the period, particularly in Warri South-West, Warri North, Udu, Ukwuani, Ughelli North, Aniocha South, Isoko South, and Ndokwa West LGAs. During the year, many people were killed and others abducted in renewed clashes over a boundary dispute between Aladja, an Urhobo community in Udu LGA and Ogbe-Ijoh, an Ijaw community in South-West LGA. Separately, five were reportedly killed and several others declared missing during clashes over a leadership tussle in Ugborodo community, Warri South-West LGA.

Ethno-nationalist agitations by supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was a key security issue in the Niger Delta during the period, especially in Abia, Delta and Rivers state. In September, for instance, several people were reported killed in clashes between the Nigerian Army and supporters of IPOB in Abia state.

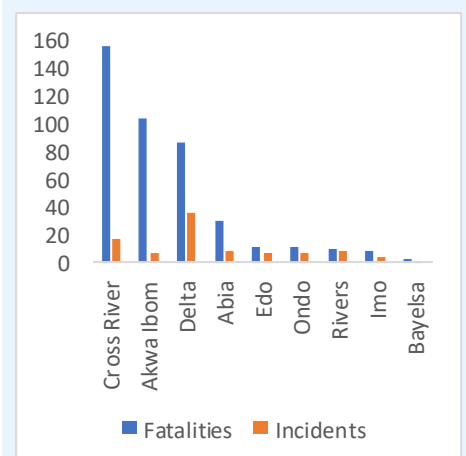
Fatalities Heat Map, Communal Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Communal Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Communal Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Gang Violence

Gang violence was one of the top three most lethal conflict issues in the Niger Delta in 2017, even though there has been a decrease in gang violence in the region since 2016. Gang related violence was more lethal in June, with 34 fatalities in six incidents. Gang related incidents and fatalities were unevenly distributed across the states in the region. Gang violence was more prevalent in Rivers, Cross River, and Edo state, driven mainly by rival cult clashes and supremacy battles among the numerous cult groups in the region, as well as general criminality.

Rivers

Gang violence was a key security issue in Rivers state during the year. Cult violence during this period was driven mainly by rival cult clashes and armed clashes between public security forces and members of the numerous cult groups in the state. Over 70 people were killed in cult related violence in the state, particularly in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Emohua, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor, and Tai

LGAs. In June, for instance, 14 people were reported killed and six kidnapped during a clash between rival cult groups in Tai LGA. Cult violence during the period also involved attacks on communities, and random killing of residents. In October, for instance, members of the Iceland cult group attacked a community and shot dead 14 residents in Obio/Akpor LGA. Five of the victims were women, including a nursing mother. Separately, in July, members of Degbam cult group reportedly attacked a community and beheaded four members of Icelanders cult group in Emohua LGA. In suspected reprisal, members of the Icelanders reportedly attacked a community and killed eight in Emohua LGA.

Cross River

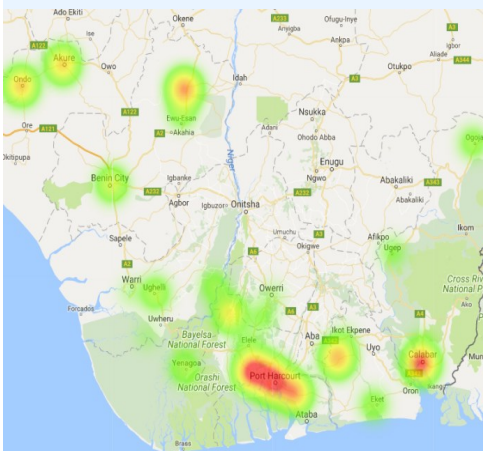
Gang violence caused several deaths in the state during the year, especially in Calabar Municipal, Calabar South, Ogoja, and Yakurr LGAs. Gang violence was mainly driven by supremacy battles among rival cult groups. In March, for instance, eight people were reportedly killed in series of

clashes between rival cult groups in Calabar Municipal. The gang war was allegedly triggered by the killing of a lecturer who was a key member of one of the cult groups in the state. Separately, in June, two were reportedly killed in a clash between rival cult groups at the palace of a traditional ruler in Yakurr LGA.

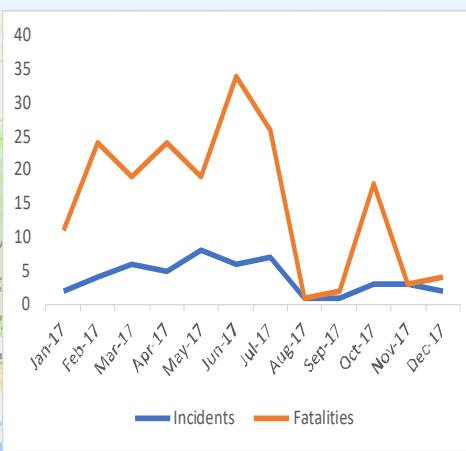
Edo

Gang violence was widespread in Edo state during the year, driven mainly by gang wars and supremacy battles among rival cult groups. Several people were killed in rival cult clashes in the state during the year, particularly in Oredo and Etsako West LGA. In April, for example, 16 students were reportedly beheaded during a supremacy battle between two rival cult groups in Etsako West LGA. Many of the cult related violence involved targeted killings. In November, for instance, a young man was beheaded, and another was killed and his body dumped on the road by members of a rival cult group.

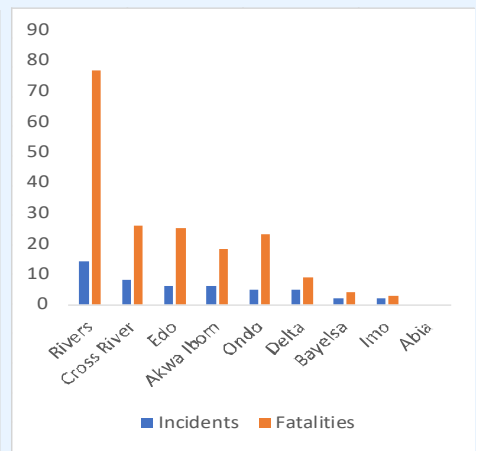
Fatalities Heat Map, Gang Violence



Incidents and Fatalities, Gang Violence - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Gang Violence



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Regional Drivers of Conflict Risk and Violence — Militancy/Counter-Insurgency

There was a reduction in militancy in the Niger Delta in 2017 compared with 2016. The decrease in incidents and reported fatalities was uneven across the region - while militancy decreased in Delta, it increased in Ondo state. Violence and fatalities related to militancy were driven largely by attacks on oil and gas infrastructure by militants and counter-insurgency operations of public security forces. More incidents of militancy were reported in Bayelsa, Ondo and Rivers state.

Bayelsa

Many incidents of militancy were reported in Bayelsa state in 2017, particularly in Nembe, Southern Ijaw, and Ekeremor LGAs. Militancy during this period involved mainly attacks on energy infrastructure and armed clashes between militants and public security forces. In January, for example, soldiers under the joint task forces code-named 'Operation Delta Safe' reportedly raided a militant camp near an oil flow station in Nembe LGA and killed two militants in a shootout. Separately, in August, militants reportedly killed four soldiers and a civilian along the waterways in

Ekeremor LGA. Following the incident, operatives of the joint task force, 'Operation Delta Safe' commenced a military operation in the area.

Ondo

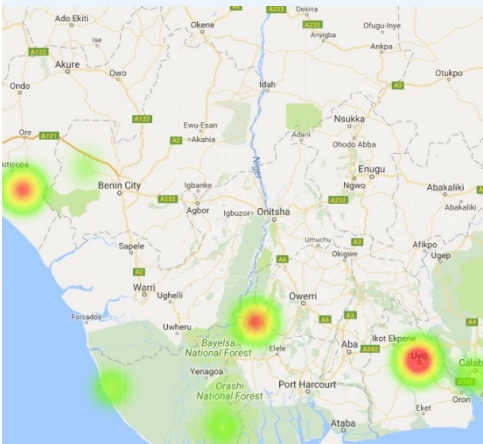
There was a rise in militant activities in Ondo state during the year. Several clashes between militants and public security forces were reported in Ese-Odo LGA during the period. According to local news reports, the rise in militancy in the state resulted from the relocation of several criminals including kidnapers from nearby Lagos state. Many criminals reportedly relocated into the state following clampdown on their hideouts along the waterways in Lagos by the security forces. In May, for instance, operatives of the 'Operation Delta Safe' reportedly ambushed and killed 15 militants including a prominent militant leader in Ese-Odo LGA. Three soldiers were also killed during the confrontation. In a separate incident, five people were reportedly killed during a shootout between militants and operatives of the joint military task force, 'Operation Delta Safe' in Ese-Odo LGA.

Rivers

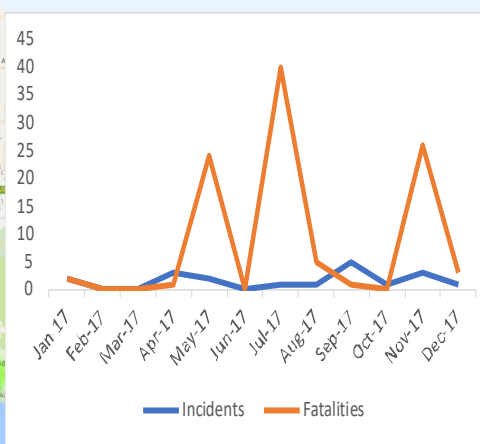
Militancy in Rivers state during the year was driven mainly by criminality. Militant activities were closely linked with cult violence and criminality including piracy. Militancy was mainly concentrated in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni and Akuku-Toru LGAs. There were many reported incidents of armed clashes between public security forces and militants during this period. In July, for example, four militants were reportedly killed in a gun duel with soldiers during an attack on a military houseboat in Tuma community, Akuku-Toru LGA. In suspected reprisal, soldiers reportedly attacked Tuma community, destroyed 15 houses and left several persons injured.

Some militants are also cultists, and were actively involved in supremacy battles among the numerous rival cult groups in the state. In November, for instance, security forces reportedly killed six militants who double as cultists in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. Separately, in November, 10 people were reportedly killed during a gun battle between militants and a vigilante group in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA.

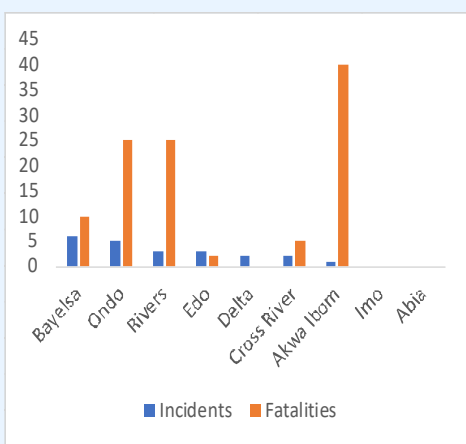
Fatalities Heat Map, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency



Incidents and Fatalities, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency - Monthly Trends



State Level Fatalities, Militancy/Counter-Insurgency



Data for map and bar charts from ACLED and Nigeria Watch formatted and integrated on P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

About Us

PIND



The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) is a not-for-

profit organization that develops innovative partnerships for peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods in the Niger Delta. PIND has developed a Peace Map to bring together data on peace and conflict for validation, triangulation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The Fund For Peace



The Fund for Peace (FFP) is an independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)

(3) non-profit research and educational organization founded over five decades ago, headquartered in Washington D.C. FFP works to prevent conflict and promote sustainable security by building relationships and trust across diverse sectors and by developing innovative technologies and tools.

The Projects



IPDU: The Integrated Peace and Development Unit (IPDU) of PIND responds to

emerging threats and mobilizes appropriate actors and resources for preventive interventions.

P4P: Partners for Peace (P4P) is a network of peace actors whose mission is to build social capital around peacebuilding by amplifying the voices of positive actors, and collaborating on activities for conflict early warning, management, and preven-

Contact Us

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Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system:

Text: **080 9936 2222**

Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and brief incident description